First Committee

Conventional Weapons

Statement by
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Mr Chairman

The most significant advancement in the field of conventional weapons this year was the successful adoption of a new international convention on cluster munitions, which prohibits the use, transfer, stockpiling and production of the weapon and also incorporates strong provisions for victim assistance and clearance.

The new Convention on Cluster Munitions, endorsed by over 100 States at its adoption in May, demonstrates the value of committed partnership between disarmament, humanitarian, and civil society experts, in order to achieve substantive results for civilians on the ground. It also illustrated the fundamental interconnection between disarmament and humanitarian concepts, and reinforced the value of using a humanitarian perspective to inform approaches on issues which might have previously been limited only to traditional arms control frameworks.

New Zealand is proud to be a member of the Core Group driving the Oslo Process, and will sign the Convention on 3 December in Oslo. We urge as many States as possible to sign in December, and are greatly encouraged by the large number of States which have already publicly indicated that they will do so.

We need to ensure that any outcome under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons complements the substantial humanitarian achievement of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We paid careful attention to the statement by the International Committee of the Red Cross in this Committee on 14 October, which outlined what it would see as complementary measures on cluster munitions that could be pursued in the CCW, and look forward to further discussion on such measures at the November CCW meetings. We continue to have reservations about the current approach being taken in the CCW's Group of Governmental Experts on cluster munitions.

Mr Chairman,

New Zealand was pleased that the Biennial Meeting of States to consider the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons was able to agree on a number of detailed measures for furthering the international community’s work on small arms and light weapons. The results concluded in July put the implementation of the Programme of Action back on a firmer footing after an uncertain few years, and demonstrates that significant political will exists to tackle illicit trade and the significant problems it creates.

New Zealand is a strong supporter of the proposed Arms Trade Treaty. We have been encouraged by the progress made in the Group of Governmental Experts over the past year, and look forward to the progression of this work during 2009. We thank the President of the GGE, Ambassador Roberto Garcia
Moritán, for his briefing of the Group's work at yesterday's plenary, which illustrated the significant momentum at national and regional levels for a new treaty. New Zealand remains committed to achieving a legally binding instrument governing the trade in conventional weapons as the outcome of the ATT deliberations.

Mr Chairman

New Zealand is committed to the full implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We have been proud to serve as co-chair for victim assistance issues during 2008. The November Meeting of States Parties will demand States Parties full engagement in order to ensure that current implementation challenges are effectively addressed.

In particular, States Parties will need to collaborate closely to ensure that those States experiencing challenges in meeting their mine clearance deadlines are supported through the extension request process to enable the full implementation of their Article V obligations as soon as possible. The Analysing Group, of which New Zealand is a member, has worked closely with States submitting an extension request to this year's Meeting of States Parties. This process, in its first year, has at times engendered spirited discussions, but it has hopefully served to keep States focused on the wide range of implications related to the extension of deadlines for mine clearance.

States will also need to consider how best to assist those States which have not yet been able to complete the full destruction of their stockpiles in accordance with the timeframes specified in the Convention.

The gains made thus far under the Mine Ban Convention in terms of clearing mined areas, destroying stockpiles, and assisting victims have been enormous, and have qualitatively improved the lives of many civilians living in environments affected by conflict. As the Convention moves into its second decade, States Parties will need to continue their close cooperation with international organisations and civil society on all of the Convention's core obligations. Recent reports relating to the potential new use of landmines are of concern and need to be addressed. States Parties should use the opportunity of the MSP to reaffirm their commitment to the Convention, and work together to ensure that the Second Review Conference next year agrees a clear action plan for future implementation efforts.

Thank you.